Testing Faith in God’s Own Country: An Empirical Puzzle in the Politicization of Christians, Muslims and Hindus in Kerala, India

Alex Mabanta
Mentor: Professor Pradeep Chhibber & Amy Gurowitz

Travers Department of Political Science
Chhibber & Sekhon (2014):
- Muslims favor candidates who appeal on Muslim lines
- Hindus disfavor candidates who appeal on Hindu lines

I ask: Do Christian Indians express greater confidence and likelihood to vote for politicians using Christian religious symbols than politicians who do not in Kerala?
Roadmap

(1) Religious Institutions and Politicization
  ◦ Christianity
  ◦ Islam
  ◦ Hinduism

(2) Survey
  ◦ Framing
  ◦ Method
  ◦ Findings

(3) The Case of Kerala
  ◦ Dominance of Non-religious Coalitions
  ◦ The IUML

Findings:

(1) Generally, no religious group has confidence or likelihood to vote for candidates who make religious appeals.

(2) A two sample t-test reveals that although Muslims mostly lack confidence in politicians making religious appeals, their level of confidence and vote likelihood are statistically different from levels of confidence and vote likelihood are among Christians and Hindus.
Christianity in India
3rd largest religion, 27 million adherents
THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

- Epicenter of Christian life
- Communal worship
- Sunday sermon
The Role of the Mosque

- Communal prayer (salat), the imam’s khutba
THE ROLE OF THE HINDU TEMPLE

- Prayer and *darsana* are individual experiences, temple priests has no congregation
Why Kerala?

Districts of Kerala, India
Muslim Population
(based on a 1998 sample survey)

Districts of Kerala, India
Nairs
(based on a 1998 sample survey)

Districts of Kerala, India
Latin Christians
(based on a 1998 sample survey)
Research Design

Prompt: At a recent meeting celebrating India's democracy, this political leader whose religious views are the same as yours said "Politicians like me from different parties try hard to represent the interests of the people who support us and vote for us."

Q1) Are you confident in this politician? [Yes/ No/ Don’t know]
Q2) Would you vote for this politician? [Yes/ No/ Don’t know]
The study was conducted in four cities:

(1) Thiruvananthapuram/Trivandrum
  state capital
(2) Kochi/Ernakulam
  financial capital
(3) Thrissur
  cultural capital
(4) Malappuram - Islamic capital
Survey Administration

Conducted July 4 - August 10
Administered with 12 University of Kerala graduate students
N = 1175
Mix of urban and rural sites, large and small-scale religious sites

Pictured is me with the Trivandrum research team
Generally, no religious group has confidence or likelihood to vote for candidates who make religious appeals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confidence</th>
<th>Confidence Mean</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Vote Likelihood Mean</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>0.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A score of 1 is assigned to “Yes”, a score of 2 is assigned to “No”.

Findings
# Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difference of the Means</th>
<th>T-statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>H0</strong>: $\text{diff} = 0$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu and Muslims</td>
<td>8.91</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus and Christians</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslims and Christians</td>
<td>8.39</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Vote Likelihood</th>
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<td>8.39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hindus and Christians</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslims and Christians</td>
<td>7.10</td>
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</table>

A two sample t-test reveals that although Muslims mostly lack confidence in politicians making religious appeals, their level of confidence and vote likelihood are statistically different from levels of confidence and vote likelihood are among Christians and Hindus.
Puzzle

• How do I explain a lack of politicization across all three religious groups?

• What explains the difference in degree of politicization of Muslims in Kerala?
COMMUNISM  (Yes, really)
India general election results

- **2009**
  - BJP and allies: 
  - Congress Party and allies: 
  - Other:

- **2014**
  - BJP and allies: 
  - Congress Party and allies: 
  - Other:

Source: Press Information Bureau, India
KERALA
20 CONSTITUENCIES OF LOK SABHA
(LOWER HOUSE OF INDIAN PARLIAMENT)

2009 Election Results

- 13 Indian National Congress
- 4 Communist Party of India (Marxist)
- 2 Indian Union Muslim League
- 1 Kerala Congress (M)

2014 Election Results

- 8 Indian National Congress
- 5 Communist Party of India (Marxist)
- 2 Indian Union Muslim League
- 2 Independent
- 1 Kerala Congress (M)
- 1 Communist Party of India
- 1 Revolutionary Socialist Party
COMMUNIST PARTY (MARXIST) APPEALS ON CLASS IDENTITY

Draws support from all religions
CONGRESS PARTY APPEALS ON CLASS IDENTITY

Draws support from all religions
BJP (PRO-HINDU PARTY) Has lost every election it has contested in Kerala
KERALA
20 CONSTITUENCIES OF LOK SABHA
(LOWER HOUSE OF INDIAN PARLIAMENT)

2009 Election Results

2014 Election Results

Legend:
- Indian National Congress
- Communist Party of India (Marxist)
- Indian Union Muslim League
- Kerala Congress (M)
- Revolutionary Socialist Party
- Communist Party of India
- Independent

Map shows the distribution of political parties across the 20 constituencies in Kerala.
INDIAN UNION MUSLIM LEAGUE

Pro-Muslim Party in one region of the state
Research Implications: On Kerala & India

- Confirms Chhibber & Sekhon (2014)
- Disproves Chhibber & Sekhon (2014)

“Muslims and Christians don’t see themselves as minorities because Kerala belongs to everyone.”
~ Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Chair of External Relations Committee in the Lok Sabha
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS


The SURF fellows